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## THE POSITION OF LABOR UNIONS REGARDING INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

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BY JOHN GOLDEN,

President United Textile Workers of America, Fall River, Mass.

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The impression seems to prevail in many quarters that organized labor, as represented by the labor unions, is opposed to the movement for higher education along industrial lines. It is my purpose to show that such is not the case by any means, but that the labor unions in very many instances have lent their aid and moral support to this movement.

I am frank enough to admit that organized labor has on some occasions opposed the so-called "trade school," when these schools were run with no other object in view but to reap profit from those whom they were supposed to teach. Another potent reason why this kind of school was looked upon with disfavor by the trade unionist was because the pupils who had been taught, or were being taught, in such institutions were used against the unions when they became involved in a dispute with the employers. Under similar conditions the labor unions always will oppose such a movement. Why, I ask, should they not do so? A skilled trade in the hands of any workman is the most valuable asset he possesses. It is from that source he must build up a home for himself and his wife, and upon that he solely depends to feed, clothe and educate his little children. Why, I ask, should he not jealously guard what is perhaps the only valuable asset he can ever hope to own in this world? But when this attitude of the organized working man is construed so as to mean that he is opposed to the whole movement of industrial education, then society does him an injustice.

I had the honor to serve on a commission appointed by Governor William L. Douglas, of Massachusetts, about four years ago, to investigate the needs of industrial education in Massachusetts. We held public hearings in every city of any size in the state. Men and women in all walks of life gave their views and opinions on the subject. Among those testifying was every labor man of any note holding an official position. In every instance we found that, while these

men were opposed to the trade schools which were run for commercial profit, they were all in favor of opening up better facilities for acquiring industrial and technical education, and in many instances offered their services in promoting the movement.

While I was satisfied that we had wiped out this misapprehension as to the attitude of organized labor in Massachusetts, I know it existed more or less in many other parts of the country. Consequently, I determined to bring the matter before the convention of the American Federation of Labor. In the meantime I suggested to the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education that they select a representative to attend the convention and expound the principles upon which the above named society was founded. Mr. C. R. Richards, of New York, was appointed. He made a splendid address, which was listened to very attentively by the delegates present, nearly four hundred in number.

The committee on education discussed my resolution and made the following report: "After an exhaustive, impartial discussion, your committee decided to record itself in favor of the best opportunities for the most complete industrial and technical education obtainable for prospective applicants for admission into the skilled crafts of this country, particularly as to the full possibilities of such crafts, to the end that such applicants be fitted, not only for all usual requirements, but also for the highest supervisory duties, responsibilities, and rewards. And your committee recommends that the executive council give this subject its early and deep consideration, examining established and proposed industrial school system, so that it may be in a position to inform the American Federation of Labor what, in the council's opinion, would be the wisest course for organized labor to pursue in connection therewith." The report of the committee was unanimously concurred in. I would like to ask whether this looks like antagonism to the industrial educational movement.

We have three splendid textile schools in Massachusetts, located in Lowell, New Bedford and Fall River, which have been in operation for many years. They are supported partly by the state and partly by the municipality in which they are situated. Several of the officials of the textile unions in each city are members of the board of management, and have done their share in making these schools a success. While I could give many more examples of the

same kind as to the fallacy of believing that the labor unions are opposed to industrial education, I think the above ought to suffice.

In conclusion, let me say that in my opinion the position of organized labor should be clearly defined upon this subject. I shall at all times, so far as I am individually concerned, oppose the trade school which attempts to turn out a full-fledged bricklayer, carpenter or machinist, in a few months time and for a certain price. It will not alone lower the standard of any industry, but is detrimental to the boy's own interest. He who is given such an education, making of him a "half-baked" journeyman, as it were, by a process which converts the school into what is commonly known as a "scab hatchery" is not a needed acquisition to the ranks of labor. On the other hand, I shall always be glad to co-operate in any movement which tends to place our industries on a higher plane, to open up better and more opportunities for your boy and my boy to acquire an industrial and technical education which will enable him to fight life's battles better equipped than we were. In such a movement I feel safe in saying organized labor is with you heart and soul.